DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 278 222 FL 016 354

AUTHOR Rutherford, William E.
TITLE Functions of Grammar in a Language Teaching Syllabus.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 20p.; In: Saltarelli, Mario, Ed. The Foreign Language Syllabus--Grammar, Notions and Functions. Urbana, Language Learning Laboratory, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1983; see FL 016 352.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Journal Articles (080)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case (Grammar); *Classroom Techniques; *Course Descriptions; *Curriculum Design; Educational Strategies; English (Second Language); Error Patterns; Form Classes (Languages); *Grammar; Heuristics; *Interlanguage; Language Typology; *Second Language Instruction; Structural Grammar; Traditional Grammar; Transfer of Training

ABSTRACT

Past perceptions of the role of grammar in the second language syllabus have been limited by the attitude that grammatical content should be addressed directly in the language classroom and that it is limited to language items and rules with definable boundaries. However, language has properties crucial to its use for communication that are not readily observable and exploitable within the traditional language-teaching. These properties include general typological qualities that determine the language's form and the principles of discourse that the language form serves. Language syllabi should reflect these properties, and may have to be reshaped to do so. Forty-five references are included. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

FUNCTIONS OF GRAMMAR IN A LANGUAGE TEACHING SYLLABUS[1]

WILLIAM E. RUTHERFORD
American Language Institute
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

ED 278222

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
B. Mainous
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FLC/G 354

Studies in Language Learning (1983), 4, 14-32.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

0. Much has been said over the years about the nature of the grammatical contribution to the second-language learning experience. Discussion of this kind shows that various degrees of weight have been proposed for grammatical matter relative to functional matter. These possible grammar-function ratios group roughly into four. It seems that any formal language-learning experience would have to be one of the following: (1) grammar-based and without functional focus, (2) grammar-based but with functional focus, (3) function-based but with grammatical focus, and (4) function-based and without grammatical focus. Commercially-produced materials that exemplify the four categories will no doubt be familiar to the general reader.

Empirical evidence bearing on these categories is another matter. For the effectiveness of a grammar-based experience with no functional focus there seems to be no supporting evidence. This is also true of the function-based experience with no grammatical focus, although vigorous arguments have been offered in support of this position (Newmark, 1970; Newmark and Reibel, 1970). What reliable evidence there is in this general area applies to the possibilities for tandem grammar-function focus (categories 2 and 3 above). A useful summary of this research is provided by Canale and Swain (1980), which leads them to the opinion that although "focus on grammatical competence in the classroom is not a sufficient condition for the development of communicative competence, it would be inappropriate...to conclude...that the development of grammatical competence is irrelevant to or unnecessary for the development of communicative competence..." (p. 13). Other, related conclusions drawn by Canale and Swain, based upon scansion of this same body of research, are that there should be emphasis on both grammatical accuracy and meaningful communication from the onset of second-language study, that early meaningful verbal communication is not possible without some grammatical knowledge, and that if the goal of language learning is communicative competence then the language teaching syllabus must integrate aspects of both grammar and function. Following from all this could be, one might say, a general conclusion that in the second-language learning experience language as a formal system must be taken note of in some way. On the face of it, this would not appear to be a very startling affirmation, given that language, whatever else it may be, is certainly also the embodiment of a formal system and that any use to which language may be put entails the activation of that system. The real issue, however, is how knowledge of the system is to be imparted to the learner. In other words, what does it mean to "focus" on grammar? What are the ways by which one may "take note" of language system in syllabus planning? It is to these broad questions that I wish to address this paper. In the sections that follow we will first examine the various roles which grammatical consciousness can assume in the planning stages of a language teaching syllabus, followed by examples of learning activities that can engender unconscious awareness of crucial aspects of language organization. We will then consider what modification these roles might undergo in the course of future research.

1. Grammatical consciousness in pedagogy is closely bound up with the answers to two basic questions: What is it that is to be brought to consciousness? and How is it to be done? The "what" question is the pedagogical extension of "What do we know about how language is organized and how it serves communication?" The "how" question is the pedagogical extension of "What do we know about how language learning takes place?"

1.1 It will be suggested here that what it is of language system that is available for pedagogical consideration is a richer resource than is customarily recognized, if cursory inspection of current commercial language teaching materials is an accurate indication.

1.1.1 Pedagogical attention to language form is rooted in a conception of language whose formalism is directly manifested in discrete entities such as the familiar bound morphemes, parts of speech, verb tense, clausal units, sentence types, etc. It is therefore a relatively easy matter to let such entities constitute points of focus in the teaching syllabus, or units to be "mastered," so to speak (Rutherford, 1980). Underlying this approach is usually the tacit assumption that successful language learning is equivalent in large part to the cumulative mastery of sequentially introducing such units. And more recently, of course, the "unit-accumulation" approach has been extended to include varieties of so-called language "functions." (For discussion of this, see Widdowson, 1978; Rutherford, 1978.) That language system could be conceived for pedagogical purposes as a structural taxonomy is not surprising, however, given (1) that language pedagogy is still under the influence of the pre-transformational linguistic paradigm (Kuhn, 1970) in which language system is defined exclusively as the hierarchical distribution of language constituents, and (2) that what is most readily available in language system for immediate conscious inspection, by teacher and learner alike, are these same constituents of surface syntax, morphology, and phonology. Largely absent then from the thinking that goes into language pedagogy are the notions (a) that there are unobservable properties of language system that are crucial to its implementation, and (b) that pedagogical attention to language system need not of necessity lead automatically to classroom attention. A long characteristic of language pedagogy has been the conversion of observable discrete language entities into observable discrete language learning material, and I would like to suggest that such practices even at best reveal an impoverished view of what language system really is, at least to the extent that we can presently know it.

1.1.2 What then are some of these properties with respect to English? The nonnative learner who has acquired the ability to communicate in English must "know" in at least some passive, tacit, intuitive sense the following salient characteristics of the English language (Thompson, 1978):

(1) that the category "subject," as distinct from "topic," is basic to canonical sentence form;

(2) that (preverbal) subject position must always be filled;

(3) that the obligatory filling of subject position and stable SVO constituent order require that there be an extensive battery of movement rules (i.e., structure-preserving transformations; Emonds, 1976) for maintaining these positional relationships;

(4) that it is common, contrary to what is possible in many other languages, to have rhematic material (i.e., bearing a heavy information load) in subject position;

(5) that if a noun phrase immediately preceding a verb is not the grammatical subject of that verb then the verb must be marked (e.g., as an infinitival: persuade NP *to go*); and

(6) that in order to maintain the subject before the lexical verb in questions a rule of *do*-support is invoked.

The net effect of these characteristics, as Thompson points out, is to make of English a language in which word-order functions almost exclusively to signal grammatical rather than pragmatic relationships. And these word-order requirements produce a surface constituent order that is often very different from the order of elements within the corresponding propositional content. Hawkins (1980) states that "English speakers have, in effect, more work to do in extracting meaning from form. They must systematically exclude contextually inappropriate interpretations from ambiguous and semantically diverse surface structures; they must reconstruct semantic argument-predicate relations over often large syntactic domains; and they must infer semantically relevant material which is not present in surface form" (p. 46).

1.1.3 Also crucial to the effective use of language but not necessarily observable at the surface would be the question of through what means the target language conceptualizes reality. For example, temporal reference in English is encoded into an elaborate system that is notoriously resistant to the "item-unit" approach (1.1.1) for learning purposes. For the system to take hold it needs to be perceived as a system. This cannot be achieved in piecemeal fashion simply because temporal reference is not an entity built up out of subconstituents but rather a code network that realizes through language one important area of cognition, viz, the perception of time. (See Sharwood-Smith, 1978, for a particularly good illustration of this. See also Clark, 1973, for a cognitive accounting of temporal and spatial deixis.)

An even better example of the mistake of trying to impart the whole through a set of contrived constituent parts is what is usually done in language pedagogy with the English determiner system, separate "rules" for which tally close to fifty in one particular language teaching text. Entry into the system for the learner will not be through sets of rules, sequenced or not, but rather through cognitive correlates of the determiner system such as presupposition and raising-to-consciousness (Rutherford, 1980). Again, the conceptualization of reality through language is not amenable to an item-unit approach in language pedagogy.

1.1.4 One final principle of language organization that is crucial to language use but cannot be accommodated within the item-unit pedagogic paradigm is that of "relationship." A simple two-sentence passage will serve here as an illustration of the kind of relationships that obtain both intra- and extralinguistically in any piece of text (Munby, 1978; Halliday and Hansan, 1976) and that must be grasped if communication is to take place: "One characteristic of wars in general is that often nobody wins. Somebody did, however, in the American Revolution, but even this conflagration is said to have taken a heavy toll on both sides." The comprehension of this passage entails, among other things, that the following relationships be perceived: (1) of hyponymy, as between "war" and "American Revolution"; (2) of anaphora, as between "American Revolution" and "conflagration"; (3) of contrast, as signaled by "but"; (4) of contradiction, as conveyed by "somebody did"; and (5) of major category to surrogate, as between "win" and "do." Moreover "conflagration" must be seen to be in a subject relationship to "take," which is "said" in the passive must be understood as something like "This conflagration took a heavy toll," and

"heavy toll" must be perceived as in an object relationship to "take." Even more, of course, could be pointed out, such as the relation between semantic concept and syntactic realization mentioned earlier. The inculcation of an awareness of such relationships is of great importance for successful language learning, but once again they represent aspects of language organization that are not amenable to pedagogical itemization.

1.2 Consideration of how grammatical knowledge is to be imparted addressed the second of the two questions posed in 1.1, and once again I will suggest that the available means for attempting this outnumber those that actually find their way into published material.

1.2.1 Perception of language system as a taxonomy of discrete units can, as we have said, lead quite understandably to conversion of such language units into teaching units. One obvious assumption underlying this sort of conversion is that the grammar must be "visible," so to speak, in order for it to be effectively mastered. But visibility, in turn, is all the more easily accomplished given a view of language that can conveniently isolate its putative constituents. Thus the item-unit conception of language system and the notion that language system needs to call attention to itself for pedagogical purposes go hand in hand, as it were.

One result of this relationship has been the development of a rather elaborate set of heuristics for the teaching of grammatical content. For convenience, we can plot these on a kind of grid, along whose vertical side are listed the language forms or structures included in the syllabus (e.g., the comparative, subject relative clause, embedded question, etc.) and whose horizontal side is given over to the specification of four parameters: *method*, *approach*, *procedure*, and *technique*. Taking as an example the possible treatments of the English passive, one would consider whether the passive should be shown (a) as a derivative of something else, i.e., the active (a *process*); (b) as related to something, e.g., the active (a *relationship*); (c) as the result of a special co-occurrence, e.g., that a noun phrase marked "object" occupy subject position if no other noun phrase is available (a *condition*); or (d) as a sequence of certain items pertaining to specific word classes, with a list of items belonging to the governing class, i.e., that of the verb (a *pattern* with an optional *list*). Under *technique* one would consider whether the selected procedure should be imparted by means of a labeled box, a modified case frame, a phrase structure tree, a certain bracketing convention, a contrast with a related structure or with selected ungrammaticality, natural examples, or verbal description. By *method* it is suggested that the entire treatment can be effected by *induction* or *deduction*, or a combination thereof. The plotting of all these parameters can be represented graphically (see Fig. 1).

Without necessarily denying the usefulness of calling pedagogical attention to itemizable features of language in the manner just noted, it is nonetheless important, I think, to recognize that the general set of heuristics that we share in this endeavor has been shaped in large part by our beliefs, conscious or unconscious, about what language actually is and how it is put together.

STRUCTURE	METHOD	APPROACH	PROCEDURE	TECHNIQUE
•	(induction)	(formation)	(relationship)	(PS tree)
•				
•	(deduction)	(use)	(process)	(labeled box)
•				
•			(condition)	(case frame)
•				
•			(pattern/list)	(bracketing)
•				
•				(contrast)
•				
•				(examples)
•				
•				(description)

Figure 1.

1.2.2 Now the important language attributes cited in 1.1.2-4 are considerably less amenable to the kind of treatment schematized in Fig. 1. Processes, concepts, systems, and relationships are not entities. They cannot conveniently or sensibly be singled out, identified, exemplified, labeled, and described. Attempts to do so can produce a kind of language-system focus for pedagogical purposes that is either self-defeating (e.g., the reduction of the English determiner system to a vast catalogue of rules) or meaningless (e.g., "Sentences are formed from words" (Samuelson, 1976, p. 40)), or both. But if these aspects of language organization cannot profitably be brought into the open, as it were, then what place do they have in the language teaching syllabus? If you can't fit it into the presentation-explication-exploitation frame then what else is there to say about it? I would like to suggest that not only are there ways of "focusing" on language-organizational principles such as these without actually calling direct attention to them but also that it is often perhaps better to bypass such attention.

Language teaching research has for some time been questioning the wisdom of teaching grammatical formulations for their own sake--be they rules, diagrams, formulas, or what have you. Just as important as how a certain construction is put together, if not more so, is what we use it for, or why we choose to employ this construction in a particular context and not some other syntactically different but supposedly semantically "equivalent" one. (See Bolinger, 1977, for a scathing indictment of the notion that a semantic constant can be realized through syntactic alternatives.) Chafe (1976) refers to the relaization of meaning in syntactic form as "packaging." Now although the form in which propositional content is packaged may be influenced by a number of factors, one very important factor is certainly the discourse requirements for the distribution of "given" and "new" information (Halliday, 1967). The given/new "contract" (Clark and Haviland, 1977) is not limited to complex language, nor is it a language principle that can be grasped only after some prerequisite amount of language learning has taken place. As a basic organizing principle, the given/new contract is in force for all of the language, from the

very simple to the very complex. Therefore, if it makes more sense in language acquisition, as some have claimed (Givón, 1979; Hatch, 1978), to conceive of the mastery of syntax as deriving from the use of discourse rather than the other way round, then it would also make sense in language pedagogy to promote understanding of syntactic rules as one means to achieving textual cohesion (Halliday and Hasan, 1976), or as instantiations of choices made at the level of discourse, and to do this from the very beginning of instruction.

1.2.3 How might one go about this? Keeping in mind a fundamental requirement of "subject-prominent" English (Li and Thompson, 1976), that subject position in full clauses be occupied, and that the choice of what should fill subject position is determined by principles of discourse coherence, it is not difficult to devise a basically simple practice in which the student exercises precisely this kind of choice (Rutherford, 1976). The semantic content of the practice material (which for demonstration purposes can be of a scientific nature) might be laid out in this fashion:

(1) (a) be - natural numbers - symbols for cardinal numbers
(b) allow - natural number system - two binary operations
(c) call - addition and multiplication - operations

Such an arrangement, which is somewhat reminiscent of case-grammar representation (Fillmore, 1968), puts the verb root on the left and strings out its associated noun phrases (minus their determiners) in random order to the right. Through this kind of display one can avoid the bias of pre-selected sentence word-order, since, after all, word-order choices--which activate so much of the grammatical machinery of English--are what we want to get the student himself to make. The student therefore selects a noun phrase to be moved into subject position (e.g., *natural numbers* in (1a)), chooses for all noun phrases determiners that are compatible with the given/new contract (e.g., "zero" for generic in (1a)), decides on an appropriate verb tense (e.g., present), and applies the necessary rules of concord, thus producing

(2a) Natural numbers are symbols for cardinal numbers.

In (1b) the given/new contract constrains the choice of subject to *natural number system* plus the definite article (or a deictic element like *this*) and the verb tense is still present:

(2b) The natural number system allows two binary operations.

In (1c), however, where the choice of subject is limited by the given/new contract to *operations* (plus the definite article or a deictic element like *these*), the subject-verb relationship is such that the verb has of course to occur in the passive:

(2c) These operations are called addition and multiplication.

If there is no noun phrase available for subjecthood, e.g., where *be* is the verb and only one noun phrase is associated with it (e.g., *be - another solution to the problem*), the student learns that the filling of subject position is still so strong that a "dummy" (i.e., *there*) has to occupy that position (*There is another solution to the problem*). If the noun phrase has a relative

clause attached (e.g., *the problem that we just discussed*), it can be represented in full underlying sentence form (*the problem* [*We just discussed the problem*]). And if the noun phrase to be selected happens to dominate a sentence (*necessary* - [*One finds a solution to the problem*]), the student can learn not just the role of extraposition but the principle of "end weight" (Quirk et al., 1972) which the rule of extraposition serves (*It is necessary to find a solution to the problem*). If we add adverbial clauses to the propositional strings and supply the necessary transitional cohesion markers (e.g., *therefore*, *however*, *and*, *but*, *so*, etc.), we come close to being able informally to represent any propositional content in a display that allows the student to exercise the crucial discourse-determined syntactic choices. The following example shows one paragraph source (Adler, 1959, p. 27) and its suggested schematized rendition:

(3) (a) "[1]Arabic numerals displaced all others because of their great convenience. [2]They are most convenient to use because they give us a way of writing an indefinite amount of numbers while using only a small number of symbols called *digits*. [3]This feat is accomplished by attaching different meanings to the same digit. [4]In the number 111, three ones are used, and [5]each has a different meaning. [6]The 1 on the extreme right stands for the number *one*. [7]The 1 in the second column from the right stands for the number *ten*, and [8]the 1 in the third column stands for the number *one hundred*. [9]The symbol stands for the sum of one, ten, and one hundred. [10]Because the meaning of a digit depends on its position in the written numeral, we say the Arabic system of numerals is a *place value* system."

(b)
1 displace - all other - Arabic numberals - because of their great convenience
2 convenient to use - they - because they give us a way of writing an indefinite amount of numbers while using only a small number of symbols called digits
3 accomplish - [One attached different meanings to the same digit] - this feat
4 use - three ones - number 111
and
5 have - each - different meaning
6 stand for - number *one* - 1 on the extreme right
7 stand for - number *ten* - 1 in the second column from the right
and
8 stand for - number *one hundred* - 1 in the third column
9 stand for - symbol - sum of one, ten, and one hundred
10 say - we - because the meaning of a digit depends on its position in the written numeral - [be - Arabic system - place value system]

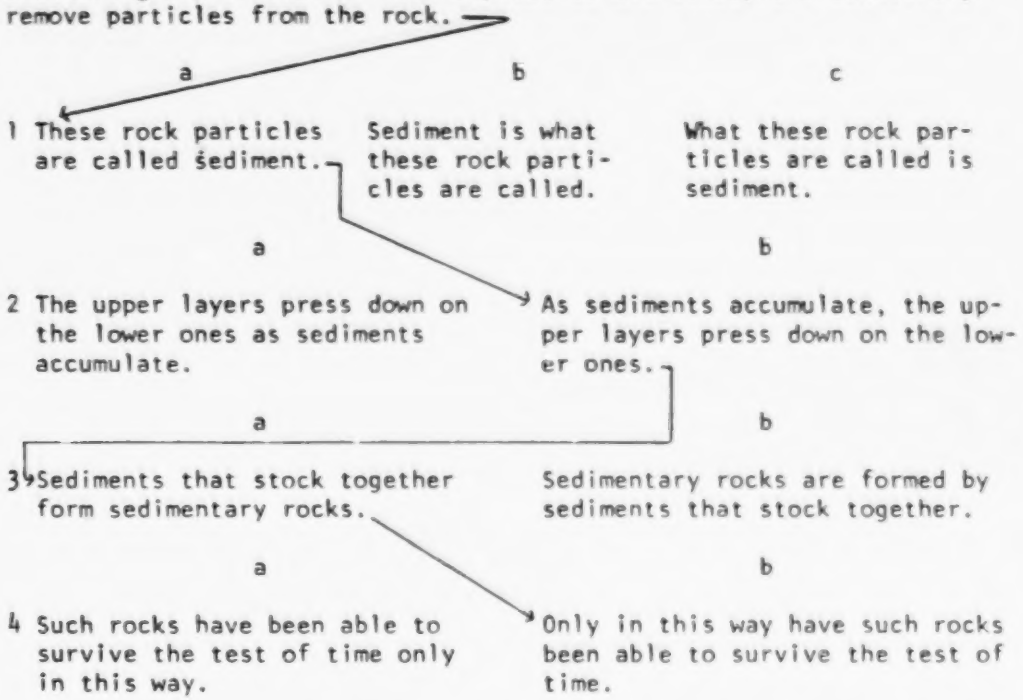
Appropriate syntactic choices need not of course always be realized as in (3a). In (3b4), for example, the author of the original passage triggered the passive by putting *three ones* in subject position, thus leaving (*in*) *number*

111 as a locative, but then fronted the locative itself, since "three ones" is given information, i.e., an example of "the same digit" from the previous sentence. Alternatively, *number 111* could have been selected as the subject, with no further movement, thus producing *The number 111 uses three ones.* What is important for a learner to grasp, however, is the basic principle that any preverbal noun phrase in English that is not the subject of the adjacent verb must be marked as such. Hence the retention, or not, of *in* when *the number 111* occurs preverbally: as the subject *the number 111* occurs without *in*; as a fronted locative it occurs with *in*. In the exercise as a whole it is the constant promotion of noun phrases to subjecthood that strengthens the learner's sense of the obligatoriness of filling subject position, without the necessity of extracting the principle itself for special focus and/or explanation.

It is possible to devise other classroom activities that depend upon successful invocation of the given/new contract. One of these is a variation of the well-known "strip story" activity (Gibson, 1975), in which each student is handed a single sentence of a little written narrative and then has to contribute to the reconstruction of the story by determining, through verbal communication with his classmates, where his own sentence occurs in the narrative sequence. This same problem-solving activity can be utilized in the teaching, say, of English for science and technology, with the order or propositional content across the individual sentences now being determined not by the logical sequence of events but rather by the given/new contract exclusively. In other words, students would collectively reconstruct the original passage through consideration (probably unconsciously) of presuppositions and what has been raised to consciousness, as this is reflected through the selection of determiners and the use of anaphora. A passage such as (3a) would serve very well for this kind of activity.

There are still other classroom activities for imparting a knowledge of grammatical machinery by means of discourse principles that the machinery is designed to serve. One of these will suffice here, a technique first suggested in Gleason (1965) and further developed in Rutherford (1977). Students are asked to choose among alternative syntactic arrangements that realize essentially the same propositional content--a choice, in other words, among sentence versions that place the same semantic content in different positions. But what determines the appropriate position is what has been expressed immediately preceding. A certain discourse context is established through one or two sentences that open a stretch of text and then each succeeding sentence is laid out as a set of options where the information content has been arranged in several possible orders and the necessary grammatical operations invoked (i.e., movement rules) in order to realize these alternative arrangements as full, roughly "equal" grammatical sentences. The student has only to trace a path through these successive sets of alternatives--letting the discourse requirements for the placement of new and given information lead the way--until he reaches the end of the text. An example of such an activity would be the following; the information content taken from Brandwein et al. (1968):

(4) Weathering and erosion of rock exposed to the atmosphere constantly remove particles from the rock.


a
b
c
1 These rock particles are called sediment.
Sediment is what these rock particles are called.
What these rock particles are called is sediment.
a
b
2 The upper layers press down on the lower ones as sediments accumulate.
As sediments accumulate, the upper layers press down on the lower ones.
a
b
3 Sediments that stock together form sedimentary rocks.
Sedimentary rocks are formed by sediments that stock together.
a
b
4 Such rocks have been able to survive the test of time only in this way.
Only in this way have such rocks been able to survive the test of time.

1.3 The activities in 1.2.2 are intended to make several contributions to the learning of English, expecially written English:

(a) sharpen learner perceptions of crucial principles of language arrangement;
(b) engender an understanding of the use of grammatical rules as the syntactic means for realizing discoursal objectives;
(c) demonstrate the overriding importance of the use of word-order to signal grammatical relationships; and
(d) foster awareness of the tight "syntacticization" (Givón, 1979) that distinguishes planned from unplanned language use.

Although the language activities just outlined involve the application of syntactic rules and the manipulation of syntactic structures, these events are not the real purpose of the activity. The purpose, of course, is to apply principles of discourse in the selection and ordering of semantic content, that content being thereby assigned the required syntactic form. But if syntactic realization falls short while all else is satisfactory, the effort might still be considered a successful one, for it is the discourse criteria which must first be met. In other words, in choosing between a textual arrangement that correctly implemented the given/new contract but contained malformed syntactic constructions, and an arrangement that repeatedly violated the given/new contract but otherwise was a paragon of wellformedness, one would value the former more highly than the latter. This is so because communication is less likely to suffer in the former instance than in the latter. It must be admitted, however, that reflections upon this kind of pedagogical role for

grammar are of only very recent origin, and we will presently consider what directions such investigations might take in the near future.

2. I think it would be fair to say that all attempts to let attention to language form influence, to whatever extent, the shape of the language syllabus are, in effect, attempts (either conscious or unconscious) to influence language learning strategies. Although the strategies that a learner employs in his language learning experience can of course only be inferred from his behavior, still a number of them have been adduced through research and experimentation. These include the so-called strategies of transfer (both positive and negative), avoidance, overgeneralization, simplification, prefabricated patterns, and others, a useful summary of which can be found in Brown (1980). (See Seliger (1980) for an eloquent appeal to language researchers for a more principled use of the term "strategy.")

2.1 Let us consider the matter of transfer. Until very recently it was customary to suppose that mother tongue transfer was in force whenever the learner's "interlanguage" (Selinker, 1972) manifested a form (1) that was similar to a surface form in his native tongue and (2) that was not present, or present to a much lesser degree, in the interlanguage of learners with other native languages. More recently, however, it has been shown that the occurrence of transfers need not be tied at all to the first of these two conditions where acquisition of L2 interlanguage form has been influenced by L1 discourse features that do not show up in a one-to-one syntactic cross-language comparison (Huebner, 1978; Schmidt, 1978; Schachter and Rutherford, 1979). Is it reasonable then to expect that there might be other instances of transfer that are not inferable from inspection of cross-language surface characteristics--other instances of transfer across language typological features, for example, as predicted by Hakuta (1979)? To narrow the question a little more, given the fact that English represents an extreme case of a language that makes use of word-order almost exclusively to signal grammatical rather than pragmatic relationships (Thompson, 1978), what sorts of characteristics might show up in the interlanguage production of learners whose mother tongues do not exhibit this typological feature (the vast majority of the languages of the world, as far as we know) and who are devising strategies for mastering it in English? Since this overriding grammatical word-order typological attribute of English necessitates that there be a large battery of rules for moving constituents around to satisfy discourse requirements while at the same time maintaining the positional relationships of subject, verb, and object, one might therefore predict that errors will occur that violate precisely these relationships. Although no research, to my knowledge, has been conducted for the purpose of testing such a hypothesis, it is interesting to look back at some of the kinds of errors that *have* been documented in past studies and the kinds of explanation offered for them.

One of the largest repositories of learner error types in English is *The Gooficon* (Burt and Kiparsky, 1972). The authors divide their book into six chapters each corresponding to a major area of English syntax (e.g., the auxiliary, passives, sentential complement, etc.) and they subdivide each of these chapters into specific "goof types," which for the whole book add up to sixty-four. What is interesting is that of these sixty-four types no fewer than twenty-four, or nearly forty percent, can be analyzed (in the absence of

context of any other essential information) as failure in one way or another to correctly observe the various rules, constraints, or requirements that are a direct consequence of the abstract typological organization of English discussed earlier. Although these errors were not attributed to learners with particular native languages, there are enough hints in the book to suggest that the authors do not consider many of the errors to be developmental (i.e., characteristics of learners of English in general) but rather transfer errors. However, it is what this wide range of documented errors have in common--i.e., within the gross typological descriptive framework discussed earlier--that interests us here.

The range in question comprises the following groups, with labeling and sample citations carried over from the original:

1. Wrong omission of subject
   a. Daddy has a lot of work. Mother expects ^ to stay at his office late.
   b. I couldn't sleep until you got back. It worries me ^ to stay out so late.
2. Non-finiteness of subordinate clauses
   a. He will give us money before ^ leaves.
   b. John sleeps a lot after ^ eats a lot.
3. Subject pronoun missing
   a. My father been so fortunate. ^ Hold a big post in the government.
   b. Abdul not enjoyed the party. ^ Went home early.
4. Object pronoun missing
   a. Donald is mean so no one likes ^ .
   b. Do you like this dress? I made ^ myself.
5. Surrogate subject missing: *there* and *it*
   a. ^ Was a riot last night.
   b. ^ Is raining.
6. Verb before subject
   a. Walked the priest very far.
   b. Was falling a lot of rain.
7. Subject and object permuted/Passive order but active form
   a. English use many countries.
   b. Much money will get a politician.
8. Under use [of *do*] in questions
   a. Paints the boy?
   b. Go you to school?
9. Missing passives in complex sentences
   a. We were recommended by her to spend less money.
   b. Mark was hoped to become a football player.

10. Snatched subject as subject of main clause

    a. He is unusual to have a new auto.
    b. The door is strange to be unlocked.

11. Snatched subject as object of main clause

    a. A girl was decided to play the piano.
    b. We were demanded to return the hymnbook.

12. Misordering with reverse adjectives

    a. You are important to come on time.
    b. I am wonderful to see you.

13. Misordering in embedded sentences

    a. He admits me hard to learn quickly.
    b. He thinks you important to hurry up.

Whatever else numbers 1-5 may represent, they certainly reveal defective obligatory SVO occurrence. (In fact the first three categories, different labeling notwithstanding, seem to show the same phenomenon.) It would appear that the obligatory S or O that is omitted in these examples is just that S or O which can be interpreted as topic, the learner presumably taking coreference with topic as governing deletion, as is typically the case in topic-prominent languages. In category 5, of course, empty subject position requires a dummy element for the preservation of S-V order.

The violation in categories 6-8 involves not defective SVO occurrence, obviously, but SVO misordering. That is, although the learner may well have already grasped the basic principle of SVO ordering, he perhaps hasn't yet learned that modifications in that ordering are governed by syntactic principles and not, as in many other languages, by pragmatic ones.

In categories 9-13 movement rules have been invoked and SVO order is preserved, but subject-to-subject raising has applied to verbs and adjectives that are not strictly subcategorized for this rule feature (Chomsky, 1965).

Although we do not know which if any of the above error categories were produced by learners with particular native language backgrounds (that information not being cited by Burt and Kiparsky), it would be strange if the categories did not align themselves in this way at least to some extent. For example, one might quite reasonably suppose, consistent with what is known of language universals and language typology, (1) that learners in general would devise special strategies in order effectively to process a language (viz English) in which there is often a not very tight fit between semantic content and the linear order of syntactic constituents, and (2) that those strategies would in turn be influenced by individual native-language typological characteristics. Substantiation of the first of these hypotheses might be borne out by a high incidence of error in precisely those areas of English that reveal syntactic "distance" from semantic content, as in the above enumerated categories, for example. Substantiation of the second hypothesis might be borne out by the fact that different *kinds* of errors are made within these same areas. A useful clue to look for--a clue, that is, to the possibility that these sorts of strategies are being brought to bear in learner production--

would be errors that are in the syntactic-semantic "ill-fitting" areas of English and that are unique to learners with the same native language.

In fact, just such a clue turned up in the written production of Japanese learners of English that was analyzed in Schachter and Rutherford (1979). It was noted that Japanese speakers, alone among the learner population under scrutiny, were producing errors in which there occurred grammatically disallowed predications of certain nouns and adjectives to sentential subjects (both *that* clauses and infinitivals), whose subjects were extraposed sentence-finally. For example,

(5) (a) It is a tendency that such a friendly restaurants become less in big city.

(b) It is more likeable to be in a large university so that I could choose one out of many courses.

We suspected at the time that these and many other similar examples were evidence of negative transfer from Japanese, because no other language group was producing them. Yet it clearly could not have been "transfer" in the usual sense of that term, for nothing in Japanese surface structure corresponded to the interlingual forms being produced. For example, Japanese, a rigidly verb-final SOV language, has no need for dummy place-holders for subject position, like English *it* or *there*. After close examination of this production, the most plausible explanation we could suggest was that the transfer in question was not L1 syntax to L2 syntax but rather L1 *discourse* to L2 syntax. That is, we hypothesized that the English extraposition examples produced by Japanese learners were all being used to make "generic statements." Nevertheless, this hypothesis still remains to be tested.

Meanwhile, other possible explanations come to mind. It might be claimed, for example, that what this kind of error represents is the result of the interaction in a learning situation of two different language typologies, Japanese SOV and English SVO, together with accompanying important characteristics such as invariant verb-finality for Japanese. In pursuit of such a claim, it is possible to demonstrate that the order of constituents in (5), excluding dummy *it*, is the "mirror image" of what it is in Japanese (Smith, 1978), and that it would be worth investigating whether these sentences of the form *it is* - {Adj/N} = [sentoid], *over*produced by Japanese learners, are at least partially the product of a strategy devised to enable the learner to conceptualize from an L1 typology (viz left-branching SOV) to a very different L2 typology (viz right-branching SVO). If something like this does take place, then the above strategy could be regarded simply as another example of what the learner does when confronted with an "ill-fit" between (the learner's conceptualized) semantic content and (the target language's) syntactic realization of it.

The implications of these language learning strategies for the language teaching syllabus are very important. Future research will need to investigate to what extent it is possible, through formal instruction, to facilitate implementation of the strategies that are needed by all language users for the perception of the loose relationship in English between symantic content and its syntactic realization. If the native English speaker has subconsciously to

"work hard" at doing this, as Hawkins suggests, then how much harder the task of the language learner, whose notion of such a relationship has already been shaped in a different way by the typological organization of his own mother tongue. It is recognition of this particular kind of language learning difficulty, and of the desirability of exploring ways in which the syllabus might alleviate it, that could well be taken up in ongoing research into pedagogical grammar and its place in the language teaching syllabus.

2.2 The past history of the language teaching profession might lead one to want to turn any findings from the above suggested research into a new kind of language-teaching "unit," one which served to focus classroom attention upon these newly emergent language organizational principles. Needless to say, I don't think that that is what is called for. As we saw earlier, language information such as this is not amenable to an item-unit approach in pedagogy, nor would even the "visibility" of this information necessarily be beneficial.

The suggestion has been made several times now throughout this paper that thoughts about the function of grammar in a language teaching syllabus might well flow in channels other than those to which we have for so long been accustomed. Such channels would lead away from a conception of grammar as an accumulation of autonomous discrete entities (i.e., constructions and rules) and lead instead toward a conception of grammar as a means for processing language at the level of discourse (Givón, 1979). The real function of grammar thus becomes understandable only as it relates to discourse. Hurtig (1977) put it this way: "Our general hypothesis concerning the relationship of sentence grammar, discourse grammar and the psychological processes operative in the encoding of sentences and discourses is that the sentence (clause) is the on-line perceptual unit while the discourse (*idea set/logical event space*) is the unit of cognitive (semantic) memory. Put in other terms, the discourse is the cognitive organizational unit while the sentence (syntactic structure) is the production unit" (pp. 103-4).

Once again, however, the functions of pedagogical grammar which we have been discussing do not imply that classroom attention is to be drawn to them, nor *should* one draw that implication. What is called attention to in pedagogy should at least have the possibility that it can be remembered, although not necessarily in the same way for each learner (Seliger, 1979). And it has been shown that the use of memory in language learning is not demonstrated through the acquisition of syntax. To quote Hurtig (1977) again, "Encoding of discourse into memory operates in terms of the topical or propositional nature of the discourse rather than the surface linguistic form of the constituent sentences" (p. 96). Even less then will that encoding into memory operate in terms of the opaque yet crucial language organizational principles that we have been discussing. Paradoxically perhaps, they are too important to be turned into language lessons.

3. It is time to look back at what we have been saying. Past considerations of pedagogical grammar are largely deficient in one major respect: they stem from a concept of language organization that is quite naively at variance with the much richer concepts suggested by contemporary theoretical research. This impoverished pedagogical view has had two direct consequences for the design of language teaching syllabuses: (1) the role of grammar is seen invariably as

one in which the grammatical content should be made the object of classroom attention, and (2) grammatical attention is limited to that part of language organization that has definable boundaries--limited, in other words, to language *constituents*.

Absent for the most part from the thinking that goes into how attention to language form can most effectively serve the needs of language learning is the realization that there are language properties crucial to its use for communication that are not readily observable and that consequently do not lend themselves to exploitation within the language-teaching paradigm that we have become accustomed to. These properties include above all the extensive typological information that specifies a language's gross canonical form and the relationship between that form and the principles of discourse that the form is designed to serve. If efforts to let such properties influence language syllabus planning ultimately contribute to a reshaping of the syllabus itself, then this is as it should be. For limitations inherent in our long familiar language-instructional models must not be allowed to prevent the richest possible grammatical contribution to the language-teaching syllabus.

REFERENCES

Adler, I., 1959, *The New Mathematics*. New York: John Day Co.

Blatchford, C., and J. Schachter, 1978, *On TESOL '78*. Washington, D.C.: TESOL.

Bolinger, D., 1977, *Meaning and Form*. London: Longman.

Brandwein, P.F., R. Stollberg, and R.W. Burnette, 1968, *Matter: Its Forms and Changes*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Brown, H.D., 1980, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Burt, M., and C. Kiparsky, 1972, *The Gooficon: A Repair Manual for English*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers.

Canale, M., and M. Swain, 1980, "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing," *Applied Linguistics* 1/1.

Chafe, W., 1976, "Givenness, Contrastiveness, Definiteness, Subjects, Topics, and Point of View," in Li, C. N., ed., 1976, *Subject and Topic*. New York: Academic Press.

Chomsky, N., 1965, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Clark, H., 1973, "Space, Time, Semantics, and the Child," in Moore, T., ed., *Cognitive Development and the Acquisition of Language*. New York: Academic Press.

Clark, H., and S.E. Haviland, 1977, "Comprehension and the Given-New Contract," in Freedle, R.O., ed., 1977, *Discourse Production and Comprehension*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Emonds, J.E., 1976, *A transformational Approach to English Syntax: Root, Structure-Preserving, and Local Transformations.* New York: Academic Press.

Fillmore, C., 1968, "The Case for Case," in Bach, R., and R. Harms, eds., *Universals in Linguistic Theory.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Freedle, R.O., ed., 1977, *Discourse Production and Comprehension.* Norwood New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Gibson, R.E., 1975, "The Strip Story: A Catalyst for Communication," *TESOL Quarterly* 9/2.

Givón, T., 1979, *On Understanding Grammar.* New York: Academic Press.

Gleason, H.A., 1965, *Linguistics and English Grammar.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Hakuta, K., 1979, "Some Common Goals for First and Second Language Acquisition Research," Paper delivered at TESOL Convention, Boston.

Halliday, M.A.K., and R. Hasan, 1976, *Cohesion in English.* London: Longman.

Hatch, E., 1978, "Discourse Analysis and Second Language Acquisition," in Hatch, E., ed., 1978, *Second Language Acquisition.* Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers.

Hawkins, J., 1980, "On the Theoretical Significance of English/German Syntactic Contrasts," Paper delivered at the International Seminar on Contrastive English/German Grammar, Stanford University.

Huebner, T.G., 1979, "Order-of-acquisition vs. Dynamic Paradigm: A Comparison of Method in Interlanguage Research," *TESOL Quarterly* 13/1.

Hurtig, R., 1977, "Toward a Functional Theory of Discourse," in Freedle, R.O., ed., 1977, *Discourse Production and Comprehension.* Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Kuhn, T.S., 1970, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lester, M., ed., 1970, *Readings in Applied Transformational Grammar.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Li, C.N., ed., 1976, *Subject and Topic.* New York: Academic Press.

Li, C.N., and S.A. Thompson, 1976, "Subject and Topic: A New Typology of Language," in Li, C.N., ed., 1976, *Subject and Topic.* New York: Academic Press.

Munby, J., 1978, *Communicative Syllabus Design.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Newmark, L., 1970, "How Not to Interfere in Language Learning," in Lester, M., ed., 1970, *Readings in Applied Transformational Grammar*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Newmark, L., and D. Reibel, 1970, "Necessity and Sufficiency in Language Learning," in Lester, M., ed., 1970, *Readings in Applied Transformational Grammar*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, and J. Svartvik, eds., 1972, *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman.

Rutherford, W.E., 1976, "Second Language Teaching," in Brown H., and R. Wardhaugh, eds., 1976, *A Survey of Applied Linguistics*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Rutherford, W.E., 1977, *Modern English*, Second Edition, Volume 2. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Rutherford, W.E., 1978, "Notional Syllabuses, Part 3," in Blatchford, C., and J. Schachter, eds., 1978, *On TESOL '78*. Washington, D.C.: TESOL.

Rutherford, W.E., 1980, "Aspects of Pedagogical Grammar," *Applied Linguistics* 1/1.

Samuelson, W., 1976, *English as a Second Language, Phase Three: Let's Write*. Reston, Virginia: Reston Publishing Company.

Schachter, J., and W.E. Rutherford, 1979, "Discourse Function and Language Transfer," *Working Papers in Bilingualism* 19.

Schmidt, M., 1978, Coordinate Structures and Deletion in Learner English. Master's Thesis, University of Washington.

Seliger, H., 1979, "On the Nature and Function of Language Rules in Language Teaching," *TESOL Quarterly* 13/3.

Seliger, H., 1980, Strategy and Tactic in Second Language Acquisition. Unpublished paper.

Selinker, L., 1972, "Interlanguage," *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 10/2.

Sharwood-Smith, M., 1978, *Aspects of Future Reference in a Pedagogical Grammar of English*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Smith, D.L., 1978, "Mirror Images in Japanese and English," *Language* 54/1.

Thompson, S.A., 1978, "Modern English from a Typological Point of View: Some Implications of the Function of Word Order," *Linguistische Berichte* 54.

Widdowson, H.G., 1978, "Notional Syllabuses, Part 4," in Blatchford, C., and J. Schachter, eds., 1978, *On TESOL '78*. Washington, D.C.: TESOL.

NOTES

[1] I wish to thank Peter Jordens for a number of helpful comments during the preparation of this paper.